



Committee on **HOMELAND SECURITY** Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

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Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Scott Perry (R-PA) Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency

“Examining DHS’s Misplaced Focus on Climate Change”

Remarks as Prepared

Our nation is facing serious threats to our security. Thousands of foreign fighters have joined the ranks of ISIS to wage a global jihadi war. Hundreds of these fighters are returning to Europe and the United States, raising the risk of domestic terror attacks. Our cyber networks are under siege by foreign governments, “hacktivists”, and other groups. In the latest cyber-attack against the Office of Personnel Management, untold millions of current and former Federal employees’ information was stolen, including highly sensitive background information used for vetting security clearances. The threats we face are significant, numerous and on multiple fronts; yet, the recent reports of a 96 percent failure rate by airport screeners show that our security programs are vulnerable and ineffective. Considering all of these threats – and a myriad of others - I am outraged that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) continues to make climate change a top priority.

Last year, one of Secretary Jeh Johnson’s first acts was to approve and sign the 2014 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, known as the QHSR. This is the key document for DHS intended to guide strategic planning, budget, and operations. The QHSR was over six months late, in part to allow time for the Secretary to review it. According to the final document, “trends associated with climate change present major areas of homeland security risk.” The QHSR goes on to note how climate change and associated trends can act as “threat multipliers”; it includes examples of how weather changes may lead to increased illegal immigration and melting sea ice could lead to increased smuggling and trafficking. The QHSR concludes that climate change fundamentally will alter the homeland security strategic environment.

The rhetoric used in the 2014 QHSR largely parallels past strategic documents released by DHS under this Administration – including a Climate Change Adaptation Policy and Climate Change Action Plan. In these documents, DHS was bold enough to assert that climate change poses a direct security risk to the Nation. Former DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano stated that climate change was one of the “greatest

challenges of our time.” DHS also implied that extreme weather conditions can lead to “militant groups to become active.” Are the American people to believe that the increased operations by ISIS are due to hot weather or a shortage of water? Such assertions are ridiculous and, frankly, insulting.

The QHSR focus on climate change raises serious questions about this strategy. Last year, this Subcommittee voiced concern when the QHSR strategy was released – about how it failed to address threats from nation-state actors, such as Iran, China and Russia. With so many threats facing us, it’s utterly incomprehensible to include climate change, yet stay silent on foreign threats.

In Fiscal Year 2016, DHS requested over \$16 million on critical infrastructure analysis and FEMA workshops related to climate change – more than the Secret Service requested to improve its training facilities following the high profile breach of the White House last September. Yet in preparation for this hearing, even the Congressional Research Service was unable to ascertain the total amount being spent by DHS on climate change. In addition, the Government Accountability Office has reported that numerous federal offices and committees work on issues related to climate change. Given the lack of transparency with the budget, the American people have no assurance as to how their tax dollars are being spent. I want to hear from the DHS witnesses with regard to activities ongoing related to climate change and how taxpayer dollars are being spent.

At the Coast Guard Academy graduation in May, President Obama said that “climate change constitutes a serious threat to global security, an immediate risk to our national security.” Statements like these contrast with the President’s efforts to broker a deal with Iran and failure to call the enemy what it is – radical Islamist extremism, and show just how misplaced are the priorities of this Administration. DHS faces enormous challenges protecting our citizens from an array of global threats. Ignoring the true security risks facing our Nation in order to satisfy political constituencies is irresponsible and puts us at grave risk.

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